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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 CANBERRA 001119

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 12/22/2019  
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [PINS](#) [AS](#) [AF](#)  
SUBJECT: AS POLICE PLAN THEIR "SURGE" IN AFGHANISTAN, UNION  
TAKES AIM AT RUDD

REF: CANBERRA 1103

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Classified By: Acting Pol/Econ Conselor Forest Yang for reasons 1.4(b)(d)

Summary

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[¶1.](#) (C/NF) Summary: The Australian Federal Police (AFP) union has been loudly critical of Prime Minister Rudd's plans to increase Australia's police presence in Afghanistan, and has vowed to fight any "significant" expansion of the AFP commitment. Officials predicted that between 10 and 20 new officers will be assigned and the AFP's focus will shift training Afghan police. A final decision on the size of the police effort is expected in February. While some AFP officials are dismissive of the union's saber rattling, Rudd will be sensitive to the public criticism. A greater AFP role in Afghanistan is inevitable, but the government may limit the size of the increase to avoid a public confrontation with the union. END SUMMARY.

10 to 20 Additional Officers to Afghanistan

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[¶2.](#) (C/NF) During a recent visit to Washington, Prime Minister Kevin Rudd announced that Australia would expand the Australian Federal Police (AFP) effort in Afghanistan as part of a broader civilian surge. The announcement came as Rudd reaffirmed that he does not plan to increase the Australian military commitment. Planning of the civilian effort has gone slower than expected, but Special Envoy for Afghanistan and Pakistan Ric Smith told us that he expects it will include between 10 and 20 more AFP officers (reftel). The plan is being worked out at the Cabinet level and will likely be finalized in February.

[¶3.](#) (C/NF) The AFP plans to focus more on police training in Oruzgan province and shut down its counternarcotics programs. There are currently 22 AFP officers serving in Afghanistan. Ten of these officers are training Afghan police in Oruzgan province, with the rest engaged in broader counternarcotics efforts. National Manager of the AFP's International Deployment Group Frank Prendergast, who oversees deployments to Afghanistan, said Rudd has asked that the AFP focus more on Oruzgan, where the bulk of the Australian military forces in Afghanistan are deployed. Prendergast says this will mean closing down the AFP's counternarcotics program and ramping up police training efforts in Oruzgan.

¶4. (C/NF) Officials are skeptical of how successful a police training program in Afghanistan will be. Smith questioned what AFP trainers would be able to accomplish given the "train wreck" that they had been given to work with in the Afghan National Police. Even Prendergast, who was generally optimistic about AFP efforts in Afghanistan, noted that the odds were stacked against success. Current training programs are hampered by illiteracy, corruption, drug addiction and insurgent penetration within the pool of trainees.

Prendergast also said that for the time being the government has ruled out running any AFP programs "outside the wire" due to security concerns. This places major limits on what the AFP can be expected to accomplish. He believes that a successful police training program will take 20 years to be effective in Afghanistan.

#### Police Union Will Fight "Significant" Expansion

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¶5. (C/NF) Rudd's announcement has drawn harsh public criticism from the Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA), the AFP's union. AFPA CEO Jim Torr criticized Rudd for playing politics with the AFP in a statement that was widely reported in the media. He believed that Rudd's pledge to expand the AFP presence as a convenient alternative to sending more military forces, which Rudd has publically ruled out. Approximately 10 to 15 percent of AFP officers are currently deployed overseas in various capacities. The AFPA asserts that this is approaching the point where domestic policing duties will begin to suffer unless new officers, promised by the Rudd government prior to coming to power, are hired. Torr also said that security and training for AFP officers deployed to Afghanistan has been inadequate.

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¶6. (C/NF) The AFPA is prepared to fight any "significant" increase in AFP personnel in Afghanistan, though Torr declined to quantify what he would consider significant. If the government's plan involves an unacceptable increase, the AFPA will "dig in its heels." At the extreme end, the AFPA would order its members to boycott Afghan missions, which are currently assigned on a volunteer basis. Torr claims that since making his public comments he has received universal support from the union's membership. He is furious that they have yet to be consulted by the government on the proposed Afghan deployments, but indicated that he would be willing to seek out a compromise position with the government.

#### AFP Brass Dismissive

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¶7. (C/NF) A clearly irritated Prendergast dismissed Torr's statements as "rubbish," believing it was simply an effort to draw attention to the union. He brushed aside claims that there was any mass discontent within the AFP, noting that there has never been a lack of volunteers to serve in Afghanistan. Prendergast also rejected worries that international deployments were affecting the ADF's domestic responsibilities. He did not have any plans to consult with the AFPA prior to the rollout of the additional Afghan deployments, but acknowledged that some within the government were concerned about being criticized by the police union.

¶8. (C/NF) COMMENT: The government was caught off guard by the AFPA's strong reaction to what was thought to be a less controversial alternative to troop increases. While a boycott of Afghanistan assignments is highly unlikely, criticism from the police union will not sit well with Rudd, who is very sensitive to public opinion about the Australian effort in Afghanistan. The AFP surge in Afghanistan will move forward, but there will be pressure to reach some kind of accommodation with the AFPA if only to avoid another round of negative media coverage. END COMMENT.

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